

## Second Chances- 2

by Bob Elder

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Author's Note: This fic takes place about a month after my story, "Second Chances" (So, read that first) Now, Second Chances was originally supposed to be a "stand alone" but, so many people wanted to know what happened, I wrote this. Depending if anybody cares, I could write a "Second Chances- 3". Enjoy, and let me know if you think this needs to become a "Trilogy" :-)

## Second Chances- 2

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\_Then me thought the air grew denser, perfumed by an unseen  
censer\_

\_Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted  
floor.\_

\_"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee- by these angels he hath  
sent thee\_

\_Respite- respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore!\_

\_Quaff oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost  
Lenore!"\_

\_Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."\_

Excerpt from Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven"

Rachel pulled open the door of her hotel room and stepped out into

the hallway. Light streamed in from the window at the end of the corridor, and she growled under her breath. Her window opened up into a brick wall. A brick wall! She had only been in New York for a night, and already she detested it. How could anybody live in this place?

Crossing the hall, she knocked on room 310. "He had better be awake." She muttered. "I don't know why they made me drag him along anyway." She knocked again, and a bleary eyed Marco cracked the door, security chain still hooked. "I'm here. I'm up."

Rachel folded her arms and leaned against the doorjamb. "Great. Mind if you let me in?"

"Uh." He blinked, and rubbed his eyes. "Sure." Pushing the door shut, he unhooked the chain. After opening it again, he stepped back, making a small bow. "Mi casa es su casa"

She grinned and stepped through the doorway. "That's not what you say when I come knocking on your window at 2am."

"Well, because when you do that, you always try to get me killed." He ran a hand through his hair. "Give me a second to get ready, okay?"

Rachel checked her watch. "Okay, it looks like we've got a little time."

Marco smirked. "Yeah, its only 6am. I think we have enough time to see all the sites, catch a Broadway musical, and still kick some Yeerk butt."

Rachel gave him a slight push. "You know we aren't here to kick anybody's butt."

"Restraint? From you? You really have changed."

She had changed. Rachel became a different person after Tobias and Cassie died. After Jake left. She gritted her teeth. That coward. He ran away. At first, it had been "Don't worry, he'll be back. Jake never runs from a fight." That bastard sure picked one hell of a time to start.

Rachel shook her head, clearing out bad memories. "Well? What are you waiting for? Get ready."

Marco gave her a look. "Yes, my queen." He moved over to pull some clothes out of his suitcase. "You know, Rach, you could lighten up a bit."

She sighed, and sat down on the bed, folding one leg underneath her. "Yeah, I know. I just think about them sometimes." She didn't have to say who "them" was. "Should we order breakfast from room service?"

Marco winked. "I've always wanted you to ask me that."

"Yeah, well, we all have our fantasies Marco. I just pray that I'm never desperate enough to include you in mine."

"Oh, a crushing blow by Xena! How will Marco the Magnificent ever hold out?"

She cocked an eyebrow. "Just get ready, Marco."

"I thought you liked seeing me in my PJ's. If you want to see me out of my PJ's, I cou--"

"Marco!"

He grinned and slipped into the bathroom. Rachel shook her head. He never lets up, does he? She swung her legs up onto the bed as her hand reached over to the remote bolted to the nightstand. The usual stuff was on TV. She cycled through ESPN and the local news, finally coming to a stop on the weather channel. "â€|It's going to be cold today, with an 80 percent chance of a thunderstorm this morningâ€|"

Rachel folded her arms, and closed her eyes, listening to the gentle hum of the shower, and the music of the local forecast. They were staking a lot on this mission, and everybody knew it. The rest of the war would be dictated by what they found here. Had the yeerk threat spread to the cities? That's what she needed to know.

What of Ax and Melissa in LA? How were they doing? Rachel opened her eyes, and glanced at the phone. No, couldn't call now. It could be risky. Her thoughts wandered back towards home. What about the new members? How were they making out? God, they were green. She smiled to herself. Was\_ I\_ ever that young?

Rachel's eyes settled on the room service menu, and she leaned forward to pick it up. Hm. What to get? She chewed on her bottom lip. Salad? No, no, too early. French Toast? Waffles? She grinned and picked up the phone. It rang once, and a cheery voice answered. "Front Desk. How may I help you?"

"Yes, I'd like to place an order with room service?"

"One moment."

Rachel waited for her call to be transferred, then, after a different voice answered, she said, "I'd like two Belgian waffles delivered to room 310 please. Yesâ€| Thank you." As she hung up the phone, she heard the water turn off. Time to get on to business. Rachel rolled off the bed, and moved over to the bathroom door. "You know, I thought that while we eat, we could come up for our plan for today. You know, what we're going to go, and where we're going to start looking?"

"Okay," Marco called out from behind the door. "Is this before, or after, the hot n' wild sex?"

Rachel rolled her eyes. "Grow up, Marco."

"Oh, you know you want me." He opened the door, and turned back to comb his hair. "The way I figure it, we need to try and locate the local chapters of The Sharing. From there, we can see the extent of the damage they've done."

"Think of that one all by yourself? How are we going to find out

where exactly the Sharing is? New York is a big place you know."

"We'll think of something."

There was a knock on the door. "Ah," Rachel smiled "That's probably our food right now."

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Rachel jammed her hands into her pockets and stamped her feet against the concrete. Damn, it was cold out here. Damn Marco for making her wait. "You go ahead. I'll be right down, Rach." She mimicked. People hurried past her, eager to get out of the chill air.

Marco stepped through the revolving door, zipping up his coat. "Ready to go?"

"Where have you been, I've been freezing my butt off!"

He looked around, getting his bearings. "I stopped at the desk to ask about The Sharing."

"Yeah, what did they say?" Rachel looked up at the clouds. They were dark and threatening.

Marco slid on his sunglasses. "They said that there is a local Sharing right near Central Park."

"Central Park?" Rachel reached up and took his sunglasses. "You don't need these." She gestured at the sky. "What we need is a cab. Do you know how far Central Park is?"

"Twenty Blocks or so. We can walk it."

She scratched her head. "Do you have any idea how far twenty blocks is?"

"Eh, well, the longer we stand talking, the more time we'll be walking."

"Clever."

"Thank you."

"Plus, it's supposed rain."

"Rain? It won't rain. I've got a feeling that today is going to be a good day." Marco grinned.

He started down the street, with Rachel following close behind. The blocks went by quickly, but when they were almost to the park, the rain hit. It rolled in suddenly, and, with a single crash of thunder, a huge bucket of water was dumped on the city. People went running for shelter as the wall of water came down. Marco and Rachel suddenly found themselves, very cold, and very wet.

"Damn it! I told you it was going to rain!" She punched him in the arm.

"Come on," he said, pointing to a coffee shop.. "We can duck in here till the rain stops!" He grabbed her arm and pulled her towards the door. He yanked it open, the cold air nipping at their heels. The heat of the building made Rachel shiver, as she realized how cold her clothes were. She pulled off her coat, teeth chattering. "I told you! We needed a cab, but no! We had to walk the twenty blocks!" She tried to wring out her shirt, and noticed he wasn't looking at her. "Marco! Hello? Are you listening to me?" She waved a hand in front of his eyes. When he still didn't respond, she turned around and followed his gaze. What she saw almost stopped her heart. "Ohâ€|my God."

The shop was empty, with the exception of a waitress behind the counter and a lone customer, sitting at one of the tables. His head was bent low, looking at a newspaper. He turned a page, and took a sip of from his mug while Marco and Rachel stood there dripping in the doorway.

Marco blinked. "Is thatâ€|who I think it is?"

Rachel's mouth worked soundlessly, her emotions raging.

"It is him."

She growled, a deep sound from the back of her throat. "Oh yes, it's him." Rachel walked steadily towards the man, her cold completely forgotten. Her shoes squeaked on the tile floor, but he still didn't look at her. She stopped a few feet from him. "Hello Jake."

Now, he glanced up, and their eyes locked. "Whoâ€|.?" He blinked. "Rachel?"

"Don't 'Rachel' me. What are you doing here?" She stared at him, willing him to speak.

Suddenly, Marco was next to her. Taking a hold of Rachel's elbow, he said "Take it easy, huh?" Then he turned to Jake. "It's been a long time, man."

"Marco? Iâ€|Iâ€|" tears shown out from behind Jake's eyes. "What are you guys doing here? Iâ€|I..."

"What are wedoing here? What are we doing here?" Rachel brought her fist down on the small table. "What are you doing here?"

"Iâ€|Iâ€|" Jake looked down at his paper. "I left."

"We know." Rachel said. Her voice was colder than ice.

"She's dead."

"â€|We know that too."

"Iâ€|Iâ€|I can't." Jake shot up from his chair, coffee slopping over the table onto the floor. Marco stumbled back in surprise as Jake rushed past them, out into the rain.

Rachel was after him in a flash. She wouldn't let him get away. Not again. Not ever again. She had found him after all of these years, and she wasn't going to lose him. "Jake! Stop!" But he still kept

running. The rain kept coming down. Rachel's hair was plastered to her forehead almost as securely as her clothes were plastered to her skin. Small poofs of breath appeared in front of Rachel's face. It was cold out here without her coat. Very cold.

Jake was only a few yards ahead of her. Running at top speed, he dove out into traffic, dodging cars madly as they slammed on their breaks. Rachel followed, never slowing. "Jakeâ€|Hold up!" But he had already disappeared into the park.

She kept running. They were on a large walkway, footfalls echoing in the silence of morning rain. He was closer now, 20 feet, 15 feet, 10 feetâ€|drawing on a last burst of speed, Rachel dove forward, knocking them both off of the path, and onto the grass.

The ground was shockingly cold. Water had collected in the low points, and Rachel felt ice chunks cut into her side as she rolled through the puddles. "Stop!" Her chest heaved, the cold air burning her lungs. "Stop!"

Jake struggled to his knees. "Leave me alone!"

Rachel wrapped an arm around his head and pulled him back down. "No! I'm not going to let you go until I know why you left us!" Jake kicked her away and tried to rise, but Rachel pulled him down again, sending mud and water flying. "Why? Why did you leave?"

Then, Marco was there. He reached down, and hauled Jake up, holding him by the coat. Rachel pushed herself up, glad that nobody could see her hot tears mixing with the cold rain. "She died for us all, you know! She was my friend too! But \_I\_ didn't leave. I stayed. I stayed. \_I stayed\_" Rachel kicked at the ground, sending clumps of mud flying.

Jake sagged against his old friend. "She's dead. Oh, GOD Cassie's DEAD!" Jake's hands rose to his eyes, and he started to sob. Great, body shaking sobs of grief.

Rachel sneered. "When we needed you mostâ€|.you weren't there."

"I...I...."

Rachel's fist connected flush on Jake's temple, sending him flying out of Marco's grasp and onto the cold, hard, ground. "I killed her," he whispered. "I killed her."

End  
file.